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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CANBERRA 000510

SIPDIS

STATE FOR T, EAP/ANP, AC/ISN, NP/CBM AND NP/RA,
OSD FOR DCOOPER

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TAGS: [PARM](#) [KNNP](#) [PREL](#) [MNUC](#) [ETTC](#) [AS](#) [TH](#)

SUBJECT: PSI: AUSTRALIA UNWILLING TO PRESS FOR IMMEDIATE
THAI ENDORSEMENT OF THE STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

REF: A. STATE 39747

[B](#). BANGKOK 1772

[C](#). 04 CANBERRA 2249

[D](#). CANBERRA 0016

Classified By: ACTING POLCOUNS TAMARA FITZGERALD FOR REASONS 1.4 (B AND D).

[1](#). (C) SUMMARY: Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) officials balked at the U.S. request (Ref A) for the GOA to endorse Washington's message calling upon Thailand to publicly support the Proliferation Security Initiative Statement of Interdiction Principles (PSI SOP) in order to participate in the March 21-22 Operational Experts Group (OEG) meeting in Omaha. DFAT officials told us that, in their view, Thai endorsement of the principles prior to the meeting was "not required" because the GOA was already satisfied with Thailand's level of commitment to the PSI thus far. Citing familiar views on the need to account for "Asia Pacific nuances" in working on sensitive security issues with ASEAN countries, the officials said the GOA would continue to press Bangkok to endorse the Principles as soon as the RTG could, but Australian encouragement to do so would not include language making it a condition for participation in the OEG meeting. They understood, however, that the U.S. demarche in Bangkok contained this indication of conditionality. End Summary.

[2](#). (C) We presented Ref A information points on March 8 to DFAT PSI Action Officer Lucinda Bell, in the absence of more senior officials. She expressed surprise that the U.S. would ask the GOA to formally encourage Thai endorsement of the SOP as a condition of participation at the March OEG meeting, commenting that Australia's position on the need for Thailand to be involved was well-known (Ref C). We re-engaged with Counterproliferation Section Director Peter Sawczak upon his return on March 10. Sawczak and Bell said Canberra's position was that it was not necessary for Thailand to endorse the Principles in advance of the Omaha OEG meeting. The GOA was "quite happy with the distance Thailand has travelled thus far on PSI." Furthermore, there were no other "door knockers" in the Asia Pacific seeking to join the PSI, and this was a region of significant proliferation concern.

[3](#). (C) We stressed the need to ensure the effectiveness of the OEG by having participants operate from a common base of understanding, as well as the unhelpful precedent Thailand's attendance in Omaha could set for other countries wanting to participate. Sawczak rejoined that if the only ones allowed in were those who could readily support the SOP, "all you've got is a regional European meeting." That said, he continued, Australia was "not interested in compromising the operational effectiveness of the OEG in any way." Sawczak said the GOA regarded Bangkok's level of commitment and interest as "sufficient to engage in PSI activities." In addition, Thailand's involvement would help Singapore to feel less exposed within ASEAN.

[4](#). (C) Sawczak stated that during the Eighth PSI OEG in Sydney in December 2004 (Ref D), Canada, Germany, Singapore and Japan had told the GOA they fully supported Thailand's inclusion. Canberra supported the USG's desire for Thailand to endorse the SOP and would continue to engage with Thai officials to this end, he emphasized, but the GOA did not intend to use language withholding support for Thailand's participation if it did not publicly endorse the principles prior to the Omaha meeting. Bell related that Australia's most recent engagement with the RTG on PSI had been in early February when Australian Emboffs had been told that some Thai agencies still had legal concerns. Sawczak suggested that the U.S. might be able to do more to address specific RTG concerns. Per Ref A background, we reviewed U/S Bolton's conversations in Tokyo in early February with Thai officials when he had addressed their legal concerns.

[5](#). (C) While expressing understanding for the USG's "orthodox position" on participation, Sawczak stressed that a more flexible approach with Thailand could have a "knock-on" effect within ASEAN and was the best way to garner "sensible regional participation" in the wider Asia Pacific. While Sawczak thought Thai officials were worried about how China and others might view Thailand's participation in PSI, he

viewed their legal concerns as sincere. In contrast, the GOA believed other ASEAN nations used legal arguments as an excuse not to participate in PSI. He reiterated that the GOA would continue to engage with the RTG on its commitment to PSI.

STANTON